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The History of the Inner Harbor in Images

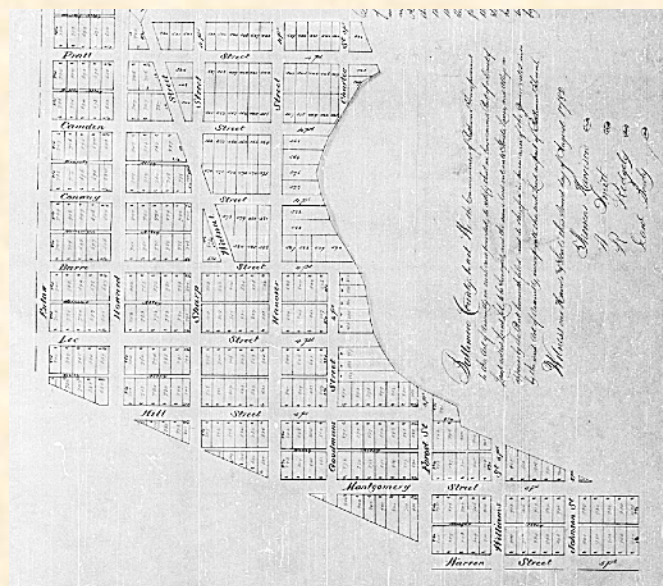
by David Safier

Baltimore's Inner Harbor is not the same place it was in the 18th century, in its looks, in its usage, even in its dimensions. Below are a number of images of the harbor and its surroundings beginning in 1752 and ending in the 1980s when it looked much like it does today.

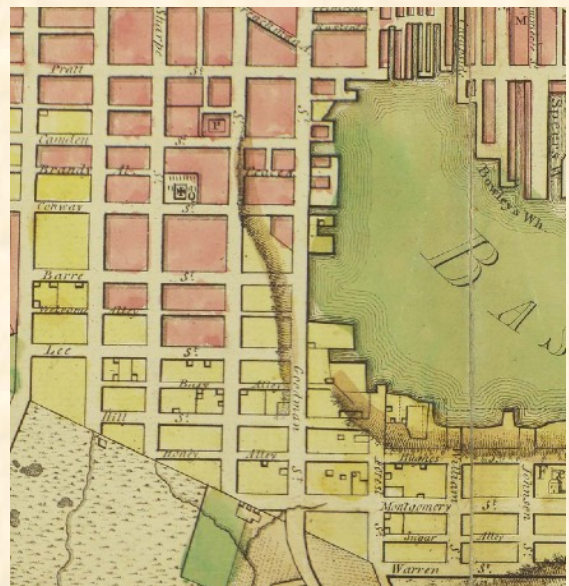
The Harbor's Changing Dimensions

The Inner Harbor we know today is a land-filled version of what the early European residents found when they arrived. The earliest maps of the area, like the 1782 map below, show the shoreline extending west of Charles Street almost to Hanover and Light Street stopping north of Pratt. The south portion of what is now Charles was Goodman Street, and the south portion of what is now Light was Forest Street.

Baltimore decided to fill in the shoreline to Charles Street in the last years of the 1700s; you can see the result in the 1801 map below.



1782 map. The shoreline is almost at Hanover



1801 map. The shoreline stops at Charles

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, created a detailed, 2.5 billion pixel online image of [what Baltimore looked like in 1815](#). The map on the website can be enlarged to focus on a single city block, and it has all kinds of nifty interactive tools.

The first map below shows the harbor area extended to Light Street. The second map sketches in the current configuration of the area.

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Baltimore Harbor, 1815



Baltimore Harbor, 1815, with additions as of 2016

Images of the Harbor

The earliest rendition I found of the Inner Harbor is from 1752 using Federal Hill as its vantage point, when Baltimore Town had about 200 inhabitants. The [Maryland Center of History and Culture describes](#) the image as having a “shocking disregard...of the laws of perspective.” Some of the details were added later to fill in the artist’s rough sketch.



Inner Harbor, 1752

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The next image is a portion of a larger representation of the Baltimore area from 1830, including the harbor and part of Federal Hill. With an approximate population of 80,000, Baltimore was a bigger, busier city than it had been in the 1750s.



Inner Harbor, 1830

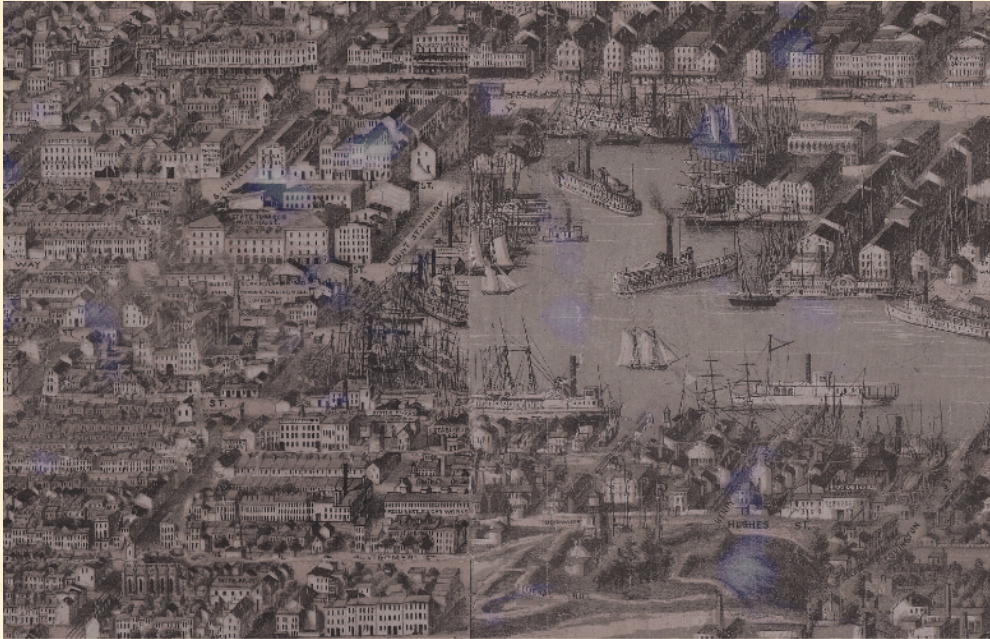
Federal Hill became Fort Federal Hill during the Civil War when the Union Army used it as a command post for the city, as shown in this 1862 image with the harbor in the background. City population: over 200,000.



A fortified Federal Hill with the Harbor in the background, 1862

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An 1869 pictorial map of Baltimore shows a portrayal of the harbor and surrounding areas.



Inner Harbor, 1869

This is the first photograph I found of the harbor area, taken in 1872. City population: over 260,000.



Photograph of Inner Harbor, 1872

I don't have an exact date for this photo of Light Street Wharf facing the harbor, but it was taken sometime in the 19th century.



Light Street Wharf and Harbor, 19th Century

The bustling Light Street Wharf in 1914 is a hand colored version of a black and white photo. City population: over 550,000.



Light Street Wharf, 1914

In this colorized black-and-white image of Light Street and downtown in 1929 you can see the wharf buildings on Light Street continue east along Pratt Street. City population: about 800,000.



Harbor, Light Street and downtown, 1929

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An aerial photo from the late 1960s or early 1970s shows the entire Inner Harbor area with the wharves removed and Light Street running right up to the harbor's banks. City population: over 900,000.



Inner Harbor, late 1960s to early 1970s

The Inner Harbor under construction in 1973. City population: approximately 900,000.



Inner Harbor under construction, 1973

The 1973 City Fair was held on the Inner Harbor. In the first photo looking toward Federal Hill, 68 year old Karl Wallenda, founder of the famous Flying Wallendas, opened the fair by walking across a 600 foot wire stretched 60 feet above the water between two cranes.

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Karl Wallenda opening the 1973 City Fair on the Inner Harbor



1973 City Fair on the Inner Harbor

This is a portion of an aerial photo of the city from the 1980s, with the HarborPlace buildings on the Inner Harbor in place. City population: between 750,000 and 800,000.



The Inner Harbor With HarborPlace Buildings, 1980s